THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. I. January 24, 1936 Tebet 29, 5696 No. 19

EDITORIALS

RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE BIRTH CONTROL CONTROVERSY

FIRST STEP IN JEWISH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

By Israel B. Rappoport

EDUCATING FOR ART IN JEWISH LIFE

By Temima Nimtzowitz

Published by

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM

15 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y.

FORTHCOMING ISSUES

of

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST

WILL CONTAIN A SERIES OF

THREE ARTICLES

by

MILTON STEINBERG

on

"ANTI-SEMITISM"

A PENETRATING STUDY OF ITS CAUSES, ITS EFFECTS
AND THE PROBLEM OF COMBATTING IT.

●

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

●

BE SURE TO RECEIVE THE ISSUES WITH THESE ESSAYS!

— —

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST,
15 West 86th Street
New York, N. Y.

Please send me THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST for ..... year(s),

for which I am enclosing $.....

Name.....

Annual
Subscription: $1.00
Foreign: $1.25

Address.....

.....

THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

Vol. I. January 24, 1936 Tebet 29, 5696 No. 19

EDITORIAL BOARD
MORDECAI M. KAPLAN, Chairman

Ben Zion Bokser Ira Eisenstein
Israel S. Chipkin Eugene Kohn
Samuel Dinin Leon S. Lang
Milton Steinberg

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Isaac B. Berkson Israel Goldstein
Barnett R. Brickner Jacob S. Golub
Alexander M. Dushkin Edward L. Israel

The RECONSTRUCTIONIST is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues starting in October, by The Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription $1.00 a year; foreign $1.25; individual copy 10 cents. Entered as second class matter January 9, 1935, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.
The editorials represent the opinions of the editors only.

EDITORIALS

Religion in the Public Schools

EVERY now and then an incident occurs which excites the ardent patriots who zealously guard the free public schools from invasion by ecclesiastical bodies. The old cry is raised about keeping religion out of the school., and attention is again called to the action of the founding fathers, etc., who forever and irretrievably separated Church and State. A short time ago, the custodian of school buildings in Mount Vernon refused to permit the performance of a Christmas Oratorio, and it was a rabbi, among others, who indignantly demanded a stop to such foolishness, and the refusal was rescinded. Word now comes from St. Louis that the educational authorities there have just granted permission to one of the congregational schools to hold Hebrew classes in a public school building after public school hours. This action, however, is meeting the opposition of one of the Reformist rabbis of St. Louis, who fears that it would set a dangerous precedent, which other religious groups might follow.

It is about time we realized that in a country where the vast majority of the population is Christian, it is impossible to keep Christianity out of the schools, despite the official separation of Church and State. If anything, there has been an increased emphasis placed in the last few years upon Christmas and Easter celebrations and vacations. It is useless to fight this tendency. What we should do is to see to it that *Jewish* culture receives some recognition. The inclusion of Hebrew in the course of study in the high schools of New York, St. Louis and other cities is a step in this direction.

But granted even that we should deprecate all attempts to permeate the public school with either Christian or Jewish elements during *school* hours, what possible objection can there be to use of the public school building for religious-cultural purposes after school hours? A Jew who opposes the granting of public school facilities for Jewish purposes, for fear that Catholics might ask for similar facilities, acts like the dog in the manger.

The use of public school facilities by other religious groups would no doubt serve us a most potent incentive to Jewish parents to give their chidlren a religious training. That should be sufficient reason for a rabbi not to begrudge the granting of school facilities to all religious groups. He should be the last person in the world to obstruct any move that would make for the furtherance of religious knowledge, whether it be Christian or Jewish.

St. Louis need not tremble for the future of her public schools. Chicago and other communities have long granted the use of their school buildings to Jewish schools. Church and State are still separate in Chicago.

The Birth Control Controversy

CARDINAL HAYES recently gave public expression from his pulpit to the attitude of the Catholic Church in opposition to birth control. His utterance called forth a reply signed by thirteen prominent Protestant and Jewish leaders who are advocates of birth control. The exchange of opinion through the press led to a counter-exchange which rests for the present with a statement issued on behalf of the Catholic position by the Rev. Dr. Edward Robert Moore in the press of January 1st. There is no need for recapitulating the arguments advanced by the two sides of the controversy. They proceeded from radically different premises and inevitably reached opposite conclusions. It is quite apparent that Cardinal Hayes and his opponents speak two different languages. But it is important by virtue of that fact that the points of view which are so sharply antithetical be clarified and that the language which Cardinal Hayes uses be revealed for what it is—a language of confusion.

The position of Cardinal Hayes and his Church is on the surface perfectly clear. The Cardinal is an orthodox theologian. So far as he is concerned, morality is a matter, in the first place, of divine revelation. At certain moments in history, through the prophets, through the God who became flesh, and through the authoritative dicta of the Roman Catholic Church, immutable moral principles were enunciated to guide man's conduct. These regulations constitute an unchangeable body of moral law which must be followed regardless of its consequences for the weal or woe of humanity. Among these principles, the Catholic Church insists, is the one that man must not interfere with the natural consequences of the sex act. But the Catholic Church does not justify its rules for conduct merely on the grounds of their supernatural sanction. The theologians of the Church insist that the "Divine Law" is also natural. In other words, they contend if one examines the world with dispassionate reason in an effort to derive principles to guide man's action, one will through the use of intelligence arrive at the same ethical regulations which are prescribed by the Church. How significant the Catholics regard the naturalness of their moral principles can be seen especially in Dr. Moore's statement published on January 1st. Time and again he speaks of "the natural consequences of the marital act." He refers to contraception as "an act against nature, condemned by the Church as contrary to moral law." He refers to "the existence of a moral code established by nature herself." He indicates both from classical literature and from other non-Catholic sources how general is the opinion that the moral principles which the Church advocates are also natural.

Nor does the Catholic position rest at that point. It is not content to say merely that its regulations are divine and natural at once. Since they are both of these, they must also be practically wise. No one can violate the law of God and the law of nature without injuring the welfare of mankind. The third phase of the Catholic argument then with special reference to birth control is to demonstrate that the application of birth control will lead to race suicide, to economic disturbances and to the impoverishment of life generally.

The case of the Catholic Church against birth control rests then on the premises. It objects to birth control as being contrary to religion, meaning by that word the revealed and unchallengeable doctrines of the Catholic Church. It objects to birth control as being unnatural, and it objects to birth control as destructive of human welfare.

II.

The Reconstructionist does not generally engage in theological controversy, but it is important that this case of the Catholic Church be examined point by point

and that a country-case then be stated. It is scarcely necessary to analyze very seriously the Catholic claim that its teachings represent a special divine revelation. We of the Reconstructionist have a theory of revelation which we shall state in what follows, but we can hardly subscribe to the Catholic assertion that its doctrine is immutable and unchallengeable. Was it a divinely revealed law which made the Catholic Church sanction serfdom in the Middle Ages? Was it a supernatural morality which made the Church resist the democratic currents in Europe in the 18th century? Can the Church lay claim to the possession of an unchallenged truth after having fought the scientific theories of Bruno and the astronomic theories of Copernicus and Galileo — decisions on which the Church has been indisputably in the wrong. What has happened since has been that the Catholic Church has very quietly swallowed the "error" which it resisted. To be sure, the Catholic Church has its answer. One must realize that in dealing with Catholic prelates, one is handling a group of human beings who have made a special study of the subtleties of logic and argumentation. The Catholics will then tell you that on Copernican astronomy, for example, it was not the teaching of the Church which was wrong but the interpretation of that teaching by Catholic authorities which was in error. But once the Church has reached that point, can one not logically argue that the interpreters of the supposedly revealed doctrine may be wrong on the issue of birth control? To be sure, one cannot argue with anyone who insists that what he says has a sanction that lies beyond reason, but those of us who use our reason are not quite ready to accept the premises from which the Church proceeds —those of a supernatural revelation.

What have we to say about the contention of the Church that birth control is unnatural? We point to the use of the word "nature" by the Cardinal and by Dr. Moore as a magnificent manifestation of sophistry and confused thinking. What do these Catholic gentlemen believe to be the significance of the words "natural" or "unnatural?" Is any mechanical device with which man was not originally equipped and with which man modifies the conditions of his life to be regarded as unnatural? If so, it is unnatural for men to wear shoes. It is unnatural for human beings to use spectacles. It is unnatural for men to employ scientific medicine in order to ward off disease. It is unnatural for society to insist that the sexual instinct must be confined in its expressions to a socially recognized state of marriage. If birth control is wrong because it marks the advocacy of a mechanical interference with the consequences of nature in the raw, then most of the devices which men now use to control or enrich life are also contrary to nature. On the other hand, let us regard this admiration for nature from another viewpoint. Nature has created the law of the jungle. It has endowed man with the bloodlust, with envy, with cupidity and with other undesirable traits. Would Dr. Moore argue that because these are natural, therefore they are good?

Observe this interesting detail concerning Dr. Moore's statement. In his attempt to show that even pagans acknowledged the existence of "a moral code established by nature herself," he says, "it is the law to which Cicero referred in his classic defence of Milo." We should like to remind the Reverend Doctor, in the first place, that he has lifted a quotation from Cicero bodily out of its context. For when one reads the large passage from which this quotation is an extract, he discovers that the only natural law to which Cicero referred is that of the right of self-defence, "that if our life be in danger from plots or from open violence or from the weapons of robbers or enemies, every means of securing our safety is honorable." Is it possible that Dr. Moore has not read the whole of Cicero's oration? If so, we should like to indicate further that the Titus Annius Milo whom Cicero was defending in this speech was scarcely an

individual capable of being used as an illustration of the moral law in action. Milo was a Roman political boss, dictator of Lanuvium, an active street brawler, who was finally convicted of the murder against which Cicero defended him. Is it not a sad commentary on Dr. Moore's argument concerning the "moral code established by nature" that his case must be supported by a quotation from the brief of a lawyer defending a rogue?

In brief, the whole of the Catholic argument about nature means absolutely nothing. It is all a wilderness and confusion of words.

III.

Let us postpone for a moment the third Catholic argument, that relating to the actual consequences of birth control and turn to the position of the signers of the statement favorable to it. To them and to The Reconstructionist as well, revelation is not the possession of any special group nor is it a phenomenon which occurred only at specific moments in history. To The Reconstructionist revelation is a continuous process by which men discover the principles and the ideals by which they should live. We regard the moral law not as identical with natural law but, like it, discovered. Just as scientific law is made known slowly and progressively through reason, experiment and experience, so the moral principles of life are discovered as a result of cumulative human experience. Just as the formulation of scientific laws must be revised from time to time in the light of new knowledge, so the formulation of moral principles must be revised from time to time in the light of larger human experience. Does this process of constant revision of moral principle mean that there is no moral law? No more than the constant revision of laws in natural sciences means that there is no scientific law. In both the fields of morality and science we regard law as real, but we regard it as an object of progressive discovery. We are no less insistent than the Cardinal upon the divinity of moral law. But he sees the divine only in that which is revealed to the Catholic Church. We see God in all those manifestations of the human spirit by which it discovers the truth.

The Cardinal is undoubtedly in the wrong when he says that we who advocate birth control do not believe in the reality of the moral law. We hold that belief as earnestly as does His Eminence. We do differ from him both in the sources from which we derive that law and in the purposes to which we direct it. The Cardinal, as we have indicated, makes his morality entirely a matter of revelation supported by a vague concept known as nature. He insists that the only true statement of moral principle is to be found in the authoritative teachings of his Church. He has the right to assert that we do not accept his theory of the origins of morality nor what constitutes it. He has not the right to argue, as he does, that we do not believe in the objective reality of a moral law.

We are now in a position to turn to what is in some respects the whole crux of the matter, namely, the purposes of morality. From his authoritarian position the Catholic logically argues that his morality is an end in itself. He does assert that his morality being both divine and natural must lead to favorable consequences. But even if it did not, what God had ordered, man must fulfill. He accuses his opponents of using one standard by which they judge birth control, namely, the utilitarian. He contends that in their entire argument they have been motivated only by considerations of "social utility." On the grounds of social utility there are any number of objectionable procedures which might be justified, such as, for example, mercy killings and the destruction of the unemployables.

We cannot speak for all the signers of the pronouncement against the Cardinal's argument but we can speak for The Reconstructionist. As far as we are concerned, it is not true that we are motiv-

ated entirely by considerations of social utility. In the first place, that very concept like the concept of nature is a vague, confused one and can be construed in different ways. In endorsing birth control we have a definite moral ideal in view. We are concerned not with the survival of the fittest but with the thought *that as many as possible be made fit to survive.* In other words, our ideal is the enrichment of the life of every human being who does come into the world. We regard parenthood as too sacred and too fraught with solemn responsibilities to justify its being imposed upon people against their will and regardless of their abilities to discharge its responsibilities. To us the human personality is the goal of all moral effort. We have so profound a reverence for each human being that we insist that every person brought into the world shall be born under conditions which will allow him a full opportunity to develop his potentialities. The infant requires a healthy mother. He requires a mother who has not given birth to a child just a year before and who is consequently not strong enough to support him. The infant has the right to education; to a decent standard of living; to the tender solicitude of parents who can give him requisite time and attention. For the Cardinal to assert that an over-burdened family must accept another child to be reared in poverty, misery or with inadequate care from his parents and to insist on that position on the grounds that such is the will of God seems to us to be little short of blasphemous. For how can one assert that the will of God demands lines of action which are destructive of the sanctity of the human personality? It is not true then that the advocates of birth control are concerned only with social utility. They are concerned with the enhancement of each human personality. This is our case. We want each human being who is brought into the world to have a full opportunity to rise to his complete humanity and inherent divinity.

IV.

And now for the practical consequences of the two positions. Certainly, the Cardinal must be aware of the fact that large numbers of married people practise birth control today, even married Catholics. All that the Cardinal's policy succeeds in accomplishing is that birth control which is so widely practised shall be practised without the advantages and the protections which scientific medicine could afford. The policy of the Cardinal means, in brief, that he would drive people to bootleg devices and bootleg information and that he would force upon people dangerous methods of abortion. The well-meaning gentleman who would compel people to become parents against their will cannot dodge his share of responsibility for these sinister consequences.

Will birth control lead to race suicide as the Cardinal insists? It may be true that when knowledge of birth control is more widely popularized that people will avail themselves of the information to evade the responsibility of parenthood. But the remedy for this situation is not to thrust parenthood upon people who do not desire it. It is rather to inspire people with the religious desire to exercise their divine prerogative of bringing new life into the world in the spirit of true and responsible agents; it is to cultivate in them a reverent appreciation of the values of family life; it is to encourage them to seek those deep satisfactions which come from transmitting to our posterity whatever has given meaning and character to our own lives, thus perpetuating our personality beyond the extent of individual existence and conferring immortality upon it. The Reconstructionist then endorses birth control. It sees in it nothing which is inherently irreligious, immoral and unnatural. On the contrary, in so far as birth control enables human beings to bring into the world richer personalities, it sees in birth control a means for attaining the goal of all moral effort—the spiritual enrichment of each individual.

But there is one last word of warning.

Birth control in itself is not enough. People must not fall into what we have, in another issue of The Reconstructionist, denominated as the panacea fallacy. To establish birth control universally under our present economic and social order might serve only to give to the exploiting classes another instrument of suppression. Thus, it is perfectly conceivable that at the present time when labor is a drug upon the market and when capital is taxed for relief purposes, that birth control be used to keep down the relief rolls. It is possible under circumstances which prevail in Germany that birth control be used to penalize dissident and discontented elements of the population by insisting on licenses for parenthood and by refusing them the right to bring children into the world. Once again we must insist that social progress cannot be made on one front alone, lest whatever advance be attained be subject to flank attack. The movement must be all along the lines. Our social order must be remade so as to give the maximum freedom and liberty to all humanity. But for the present the struggle must be continued on this front as on all others so that mankind may move forward to a saner and more desirable society, to an order in which parents will freely desire to bring children into the world.

First Step in Jewish Community Organization

By Israel B. Rappoport

IN recent months, there has been a great deal of discussion of the need of an organized Jewish community. A new receptivity to the idea has been manifested by important sections of the Jewish population. This perhaps is the psychological moment for practical first measures in setting up a communal organization. For a time comes in the life history of every idea when to continue merely vocal propaganda for the idea without an attempt at the concrete embodiment of it in some practical form is a sure way to kill the idea. Action is required, even if it be limited in scope; motivation should be followed by activity. The principle of learning or achieving by doing is as basic to the development of social cohesion on a community scale as it is to the development of skills or understandings in individual learning.

Recently spokesmen of Jewish Federations of Charities have begun to advocate a change in the concept of Federation. Some Federation leaders have even outlined in some detail the steps which a Federation of Charities is to go through in the process of conversion into *the* representative community agency. Undoubtedly, if any single type of organization is in position to extend its scope of action and modify its program so as to approach the concept of a democratically-organized and representative community organ, the Federation approaches nearest that type. But Federation would indeed have to undergo a most radical transformation to become the embodiment of the community idea. The present basis of Federation is distinctly restrictive: membership is limited to those who are in position to make an annual contribution, the minimal limit of which is above the means of a large section of the population. The cornerstone idea of Federation, moreover, is fundamentally the philanthropic principle. Its work may frequently be more than merely ameliorative; it may even be superbly constructive or reconstructive in certain phases of its activity. But basically it is not a democratic cooperative institution. To become the community, it would not only have to intensify certain types of activity and assume new tasks, but it would have to become transformed in its fundamental make-up. It is doubt-

ful whether Federation leaders are ready to permit such a drastic metamorphosis.

It is also exceedingly doubtful whether it is possible at the very first to establish a community organization that should function as a plenipotentiary of the Jewish population in all aspects of *positive* community life. The New York "Kehillah" of 1908-18 attempted that and failed. Whatever external factors contributed to the collapse of "Kehillah" in New York in 1918, there seems little doubt that the major cause of failure was an overreachingly ambitious program. The "Kehillah" attempted to encompass all phases of Jewish life—religious, cultural, educational, philanthropic—in a metropolitan center where the population was entirely too heterogeneous and the divisions along economic, religious, cultural and social lines entirely too great to permit a unified program. The Jewish "Kahal" organization of former centuries is as yet a doubtful possibility in the welter of diversities of large urban centers.

It may be instructive to analyze the defunct New York Kehillah one step further; there may be a lesson to be learned. A study of the composition of the Kehillah reveals an involved and inequitable basis of representation, an undemocratic method of choosing the administration, lack of responsibility of the executive branch of the electorate (the executive constituted a district of the American Jewish Committee), a body of delegates (550) too unwieldy for discussion. Even a cursory glance at its make-up will convince the unprejudiced person that basically the Kehillah was far from a democratic instrument. It consequently did not enjoy the confidence of the masses of population. That it was in fact an unknown quantity to very large groups can be gathered from the following frank statement of Harry Sackler, administrative secretary of the organization (Jewish Communal Register, p. 55): "As a central organization, the Kehillah was far too removed from the simpler elements of our population, who are impressed only by a concrete, visible fact. Many of them had only heard of the existence of the Kehillah and most likely considered it as one of many good organizations."

The New York Kehillah, it would appear, foundered because of its complicated composition, undemocratic character and overly ambitious program. Perhaps the lesson to be learned from its failure is that a community organization must be clearly and unfailingly democratically representative and exceedingly simple in composition. It must, moreover, begin with the barest minimum of positive program, a minimal platform which would win the adherence of the most diverse elements of the Jewish population, even of those elements whose Jewish consciousness may be limited to mere recognition of a *present* Jewish status and may not be vitally concerned about the Jewish future.

The importance of moderation in the program of an inclusive community organization cannot be overemphasized The foundations of the community must be laid on the few factors which are indisputably common denominators of diversified Jewish groups. But the need for a democratically organized, central Jewish communal agency, the need for a "recognized and authoritative spokesman of the community" is greater today than ever. In the face of the monumental catastrophe to world Jewry caused by the physical and spiritual degradation of German Jewry, in the presence of the economic impasse facing Polish Jewry, in view of the gathering clouds of Jew-awareness, if not frank anti-Semitism, in this our land of freedom, unity of some sort is imperative. The question is now one of wise engineering. Shall we forthwith and at one stroke of the pen call into being a full blown community out of the midst of chaos, or shall we build community consciousness and community cohesion by slow and gradual stages? The lesson of the New York Kehillah dictates moderation and caution. We must look for the nearest common denominators of our disintegrated life and build up community co-

hesion around it. What may those common denominators be here and now?

II.

After a canvass of the entire gamut of experience of Jewish groups in an American metropolis one is at a loss to find a single *positive* endeavor that would serve as a rallying point for all types and shades of Jewish opinion. It is perhaps unnecessary even to enumerate the various factors and weigh their possibilities before they are discarded. Not religion, not Kashruth, not Zionism, not Jewish colonization, not economic reorientation can offer a common unifying principle. And wish as one might that Jewish education—indubitably a requisite for the perpetuation of Jewish life—serve as an immediate bond of cohesion, it is doubtful whether a sufficient degree of unanimity can be mustered at the moment for a community program of Jewish education as distinguished from a central community agency for Jewish education. It is apparent that no *positively* operating principle can serve as a fulcrum to swing a community organization. We must therefore turn to a negative ingredient of our formula for survival, and seek there the integrating factor. And indeed it takes no undue stretching of the imagination to perceive that awareness of a common danger—the negative ingredient of our survival formula—may properly be utilized as the impelling motive for a Jewish community organization.

The evidence of a lurking danger in the form of anti-Jewish fulminations and, what is much more serious, anti-Jewish discrimination in the economic sphere, is piling up higher from day to day. It is prudence and wisdom to recognize the enemy and to be forewarned of the blow. Frank awareness of the danger, and unified community Jewish reaction to it may even serve to avert the evil. To illustrate: Anti-Jewish discrimination in employment in department stores is an established fact in our large cities. Little is being done about it for the simple reason that no one is authorized to deal with the situation. But if each city possessed a fully representative democratically-constituted Jewish community council, some action could be taken in the matter. This council could impress upon department stores—really quasi-public institutions in the city—that discrimination against the Jewish population is a phenomenon which the Jewish community cannot pass over in silence; that unpleasant as it may be to make a public issue of the matter, unless the discriminatory restrictions are removed the matter will be discussed as an item of the agenda at a session of the Jewish community agency and will automatically be given publicity in the press. No threat of boycott, of retaliation; merely a dignified assertion that discrimination on the basis of religion, race or nationality, is an ugly fact that should be exposed to the light of public opinion. An authoritative representation of this sort is bound to produce an effect. For department stores are aware that even if Gentile public opinion may not be adversely affected by a Jewish protest, Jewish custom will be alienated,—and Jewish patronage constitutes an enormous item in department store merchandizing. An established and recognized community organization which is truly representative of a large portion of the Jewish population can go a long way in combatting anti-Jewish discrimination along economic lines. In the course of time, pressure might be brought to bear locally for the elimination from applications for employment of questions regarding religious affiliations or nationality of applicant. Efforts might be made to have the press refuse to accept advertisements of anti-Jewish character. In the realm of economic relations—as distinct from social relationships—there is a legitimate field for community action.

It is conceivable that an additional initial function of a Jewish communal organization might be to endorse and sponsor emergency programs to deal with catastrophes of Jewish national (American) or international scope. A local program of combatting anti-Jewish discrimination in the economic field and the consideration

of emergency programs of national or international scope constitute perhaps the nearest common denominators of a heterogeneous Jewish community. The maintenance of a bureau of Jewish information and statistical service might be a third initial function readily agreed to by all concerned.

III.

Granting then the feasibility of a modest program of communal activity and accepting the principle of simplicity of composition and true democracy of representation, what might be the first step of organizing a communal body? The simplest way perhaps of bringing about a central community agency is to take the already present groupings as initial constituent units. By organized groupings we mean any association of Jews for any purpose (barring, of course, anti-Jewish and anti-social purposes, if organizations of this sort exist). This would include the lodge, fraternal organization, congregation, order, club, verband, society, auxiliary, brotherhood, sisterhood, union, federation, etc. Proportional representation should be accorded these groupings on the basis of numerical strength of membership. Exaggerated claims to membership can easily be avoided by the imposition of a poll-tax of one dollar per every voting member of an organization. Individuals who are members of more than one organization may vote for representatives either once through one favored group or several times through as many groups as they are members of, provided that for each vote each individual pays the poll-tax of one dollar. The multiple-voting privilege may safely be extended to Jews who are active in many Jewish endeavors and are ready to be taxed more than once.

To insure simplicity of composition it is important to limit the number of delegates in a community council to an easily manageable number. A council of 100-150 delegates is perhaps the optimum. Representation would be apportioned accordingly. For purposes of election on this basis, smaller groups of a similar character might unite temporarily.

Meetings of such a council might be held once a month. All meetings should be open to press and public. The limited number of delegates will prevent unwieldy assemblies, and the poll-tax restriction on voting, minimal as it may be, will prevent over-representation of any group.

A community council of this sort might be called into being through a preliminary conference of all existing organizations in the city of whatever character. Conferences of Jewish organizations have been called in the past for various purposes, particularly for overseas relief. It is conceivable that a conference called for the purpose of organizing a representative community agency would meet with a ready response. Some effort should be made for setting up a community organization. Otherwise all the noble talk of "community" will go up into thin air, and the concept of community will share the fate of the equally sonorous phrases of "Jewish heritage", "Jewish consciousness", —vague and nebulous cliches of reverberating oratory.

* * *

A very simple organization set-up with limited function might very well be a feasible *initial* step in a community organization. Following is a rough sketch of a possible community set-up:

The Name—The Jewish Community Council of .....

Purpose—(1) To combat anti-Jewish discrimination in the *economic* field only (in the city).

(2) To endorse or sponsor emergency programs of Jewish national (American) or international scope.

(3) To maintain a Bureau of Jewish Information.

This Council is not to interfere with the autonomy of any affiliated organization. The Council is, on the contrary, interested in the growth of organizational expression of the Jewish life of the city.

Membership—One delegate for every 500 members of any federation, order, club, verband, congregation, society, etc.

Small organizations of similar character may unite for purposes of election on the above basis.

Each organization is to pay a fee of $1.00 for each and every one of its members. This fee might be placed as a special assessment on members or may be paid from the organization's treasury. Thus an organization which claims a membership of 500, and therefore demands a mandate for one delegate, is to pay at least $500.00. An organization which demands mandates for four delegates will pay $2,000, etc.

There is no objection to an individual's voting through more than one organization of which he may be a member (upon payment of fee of $1.00 in each organization). This privilege of voting more than once might well be extended to those individuals whose deeper interest in Jewish matters is evidenced by membership in several organizations.

Members at Large—Any one may become a member-at-large in the Community Council, if he is not a member through an organization, by paying a fee of $5.00 per annum. This fee is advisedly larger than that of an organization member in order not to compete with existing organizations. Five hundred members-at-large may elect a delegate-at-large.

Central Funds—The funds for administration of a Council to be derived from the fees by affiliated organizations and from membership-at-large. Funds in excess of Council administration needs to be turned over to emergency program endorsed or sponsored.

Meetings—Meetings of the entire Council to be held once a month. At no time should the Council consist of more than one hundred members. Should the extent of affiliation with the Council cause an excess of that number on the basis of representation of 1 to 500, this basis should be increased. A special annual meeting of larger significance might be held. All meetings should be open to press and public.

(An annual conference of Jewish community Councils of this type for the United States might very well constitute an American Jewish Congress. This is the only type of national Jewish deliberative body that might really function. The attempt of the present American Jewish Congress to gain individual membership does not seem to promise much success.)

CONTRIBUTORS' BOX

Mr. Rappoport is a member of the Department of Supervision of the Board of Jewish Education, Chicago, Ill.

Miss Nimtzowitz is an American-Jewish artist of note, instructor of Industrial Arts at the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.

Educating For Art in Jewish Life

By TEMIMA NIMTZOWITZ

I.

A NUMBER of years ago this article could not have been written. The reason is twofold. First of all, art in Jewish institutions was a very rare and unusual phenomenon looked upon with suspicion and relegated to the realm of fancy and unreality. For a long time it was confined to a few scattered art groups which functioned spasmodically and in a manner entirely unrelated to the institutions which housed them. Secondly, the public generally and the Jewish public in particular were lacking in art-education-consciousness. Progressive schools were making desperate attempts to break through a seemingly impenetrable barrier. Their pioneer efforts, however, finally bore fruit, so that now the arts, both industrial and fine, are slowly making their way into a system as adamant in its inflexibility as that of the public school.

The Jewish layman has also been affected by this change in general attitude. Art which was once considered bizarre and individual is beginning not only to find a place in the extra-curricular activities of Jewish educational and institutional life; it is working its way, despite ancient prejudices, into the very heart of school curricula and club programs. This slow awakening is extremely meaningful. When art in Jewish schools becomes a necessity and is called upon by the community to serve a definite function in that community, we are faced with certain implications which are far reaching in their significance. What new values have been evolved in Jewish life to call forth new creative impulses? What changes have taken place in Jewish life to warrant the introduction of arts and crafts as a desired member of curriculum society? How can we account for the fact that the making of Hanukkah *menorah* is given as much attention in the class schools as the learning of the Hanukkah *berakot?* What strange destiny is bringing about the broadening of Orthodox and Reformist views to include aspects of Judaism the existence of which they had never before admitted to? When the children in a Reformist religious school make little *mezzuzahs* to hang on their doors, and the children of an Orthodox school paint a frieze showing the growth of the orange industry in Palestine, then we know that fundamental changes in the outlook of Jews toward Judaism are taking place.

There is evident an acknowledgment of the fact that the boundaries of Judaism are not limited by religious and ceremonial dogma only, but are flexible enough to include the manifestations of culture in all its broad aspects. Recognition of the completeness of Jewish life leads on to experimentation in many directions. Music, literature, drama, painting begin to function very positively. Soon these subjects are no longer considered accessory, but rather necessary and vital to the growth and development of Jewish life. That is why life in Palestine manifests itself, among other ways, through the poem, the song, the dance, the play and the picture. It has a vitality because it is natural and spontaneous. It springs from the soil.

Art though limitless in its scope, is tied to a definite geographic locality. It is bound up with a race tradition, a national temperament, a period consciousness. Even though a fine Chinese painting of the Sung Dynasty is universal in conception and idea, still its manner of handling is particularly Chinese and could have been created by none other than a Chinese artist. A whole tradition of brush strokes supports his hand as he reverently approaches the heavy silk upon which he paints. Chinese art is an outpouring of the deep religious spirit developed for many centuries through an absorption in

Buddhism. Today in a period of political and economic strife Chinese art has ceased to function in its former intensity. Japanese prints could never have been produced on any but Japanese soil. It required the love of the Japanese for precision and thoroughness, their unrivalled ability to persist, and their unprecedented attachment to ceremony, to produce the prints which have tremendous universal appeal and which find welcome walls throughout the homes of the world. A Flemish portrait is immediately recognizable as such. The unmistakable touch of the Flemish painter exhudes from every line. Modern French painting came as a result of the French spirit of adventure and experimentation. Mexico's downtrodden soul seeks liberation through miles of mural decorations.

The Jew, on the other hand, has been away from the art producing soil so long that what would be called his art is unique in the same way that his entire national existence is unique. Just as the Jew has taken over the nationhood of the land in which he has finally settled and made it his; just as he has absorbed the customs, costume, language and cultures of the races whom he has contacted and contributed to the development of those cultures, so has he gleaned from the many fields of art. In every land Jewish artists paint. Holland had Israels, Germany Liebermann, France Pisarro, Russia Chagall. But only in Palestine can there be a Jewish art. Golden hills, turquoise skies, beating rain, dryness, heat, Mediterranean-washed shores, oriental moons, desert wastes, fertile valleys, the cry of the jackal, the shepherd's flute, the sound of the *hora,* the clarity of the atmosphere, the dust of Tel Aviv, the braying of donkeys, the fragrance of Carmel's pines, the saltiness of the Dead Sea's waters, the call to prayer, the caravan of camels, the intoxication of orange blossoms, the rhythm of *halutzim* songs, the scent of freshly turned furrows, harvests, grape-laden vines, sacred stones, a new spirit, a new awakening, individuals born or bred on Palestinian soil, a consciousness of a past, an awareness of the present, an enthusiasm for the future — these and more, subtly blended wtih the latent talents of individuals, begin to serve as a palette upon which a Jewish art will eventually mix its colors.

Art in the Diaspora, however, cannot function the same way. Artists will constantly go back to Palestine for inspiration, it is true, but their art will be a mingling of the spirit of Palestine and the individual trends of the lands from which they come. Here in the Diaspora art has educational functional value. It may be used as a most effective means toward showing the multiplicity of forms inherent in Judaism. Arts and crafts is a medium with endless potentialities for acquainting the Jewish people with existing and new Jewish motifs. When a child living in New York makes a Shabbat candelabra in a form reminiscent of skyscrapers, he is lending to old symbols a new interpretation.

This art activity is doubly beneficial. It affords the individual ample opportunity for Jewish creative expression and infuses new life and energy into a field impoverished by an enforced abstention from creative release because of blind adherence to obsolete bans and prohibitions. Heretofore there had never been any association between Hebrew school curricula and art, but recently due to this universal art awakening and the recognition of the great benefits to be derived from art in education, Jewish schools are beginning to throw open their doors widely to a subject which is bound to flood their anaemic veins with fresh red blood.

II.

It was therefore with open arms that we welcomed "Arts & Crafts for the Jewish Club," by Comins & Leaf.* It is the first time that an attempt has been made in this form to set down an approach to

*Department of School and Extension, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Cincinnati, 1935.

an arts and crafts program for Jewish clubs. The book is very obviously written for adults. For them it can serve as a guide to the potentialities of many media and the function of the various tools and equipment necessary to crafts programs. Mr. Leaf is a fine craftsman with many years of experience, both here and in Palestine. He and Dr. Comins should be congratulated on their presentation of a very difficult and bulky subject. The regrettable fact, however, is that so much pain was taken to provide the student with elaborate patterns and designs, far beyond the comprehension of those for whom the book was intended, . . . "those who have had no previous training in art," that they are tempted either to give up because of the complexity of the design, or to choose the path of least resistance and take over bodily what is so carefully prepared for them.

By doing too much the authors have not done enough. Students should be guided only insofar as the elements of design and the media and equipment require guidance. They should be sent to the same sources from which the authors themselves gathered inspiration for their patterns and designs. Those sources are many. Jewish life, past and present, is rich with decorative possibilities. It remains for the teacher in the class or the leader in the club to lead the student to the wellsprings of Jewish creative life. That is why Jewish teachers and Jewish club leaders must have the necessary background themselves. To return to our problem—an original design, though crude, is far more desirable and certainly more gratifying to the student when it is completed than a more finished one which has been copied from a book. Many years of experience have taught me that students gain more from arranging a very simple composition of their own than from imitating the very complex and more ambitious ones composed by others. Even though we want to see results, as educators we must realize that it is not the finished product that is important as the great lessons that are learned during the process of creating. Most school authorities are too "exhibition conscious". When a Jewish educator announces an exhibit even before his art classes have begun to function in order to stimulate the interest of the children, we can readily realize the contradictions inherent in his attitude toward the values of an arts program. The process, which education stresses, is sacrificed to the gods of display and vanity. The child and his needs are subjugated to the whims of school boards and ladies' auxiliaries.

Here is a typical example. At a conference once, before the opening of school, I was asked by a principal for an outline of the arts and crafts program for the year. I had none. I never do. "But Miss N., we require an outline prepared in advance, so that the board might know what you are planning to do." He did not realize that the demands of the board, in my estimation, were always subordinated to the needs of the children. Even though I may know without a doubt the many possibilities for art expression to be gleaned for a certain period in Jewish History, I cannot prophesy what the children, studying that particular period, would find important to work upon as a result of their studies. I must not come to them with outlines. Even though children are very ingenious and extremely creative, they are at the same time unusually impressionable and easily influenced. It is not difficult at all for a teacher to impose her ideas upon her students and to make her will theirs. But is that what we as educators want? Do we not prefer that ideas should develop as a result of the child's absorption in a particular study even though the process may take much longer and the result may be less effective for display, as a project suggested by the instructor?

Some time ago the children of a certain Hebrew School painted a frieze dealing with Shabbat. This came as a result of a very lengthy and detailed discussion on the origin and celebration of the weekly

festival. We spent a very long time planning the frieze. The children made suggestions. The secretary of the class listed the ideas on the blackboard. We were going to show the preparation for Shabbat, the special cleaning, dusting, scrubbing, washing windows, shopping at the butcher's, the baker's, the vegetable store, cooking the "gefullte" fish, getting dressed for Shabbat, kindling the Sabbath lights, making the Kiddush, the Sabbath meal, going to the Synagogue services, reading the Torah, taking a Shabbat walk, visiting friends and relatives, playing in the park, Havdalah, the end of Shabbat. All suggestions came from the children as a result of what they had learned in the classroom and what they experienced in their homes. They planned together and worked together. It was the finest lesson in cooperation they could have learned without once hearing the word "cooperation" mentioned. Another most valuable outcome of that particular project was the development among the children of the idea of association of free, joyous, creative activity with Hebrew School life.

Some time later it was brought to my attention that a principal, hearing of this project, had introduced it into his school. I asked him about the method of approach that had been adopted in the presentation of the project. I learned that the list of subjects that was used in the frieze was typewritten and sent to the various teachers. They in turn assigned the topics to the children who went home, drew the assigned picture and brought it to school the following week. To me, procedure of this type is wrong from every aspect. For one thing, the idea had not originated with the children. It was not an outgrowth of their classroom activity. It had been imposed upon them from the outside and therefore was not vital to them, not having sprung from their great enthusiasm. There is no doubt but that they became interested in the frieze eventually, that they enjoyed the work involved and the completed product. But the great joy and value derived from the discovery of the idea and the creating of it for themselves were not theirs. Then again, the children did not do their work in school. The could not develop the idea association, in creative work, with Hebrew school. They could not develop the idea might have been gained was lost. Another vital shortcoming was that they did not have the benefit of constructive criticism and guidance. Anything they did was considered good enough because those to whom they brought the final results were not in a position to be helpful because of lack of experience in this particular field.

Of course I realize the terrible handicaps under which religious schools labor. I know well the limitations of facilities, time, space and finances because I have been subjected to them for many years. Still I say, instead of doing much and doing it poorly, do less. Instead of having every class do arts and crafts without supervision and without materials, assign it to one group with adequate guidance and the necessary materials. At least a few will gain something where many have been losing much.

It is with the idea of preparing teachers capable of carrying on this work in the future that one of our teachers' training schools has opened an art department. It is the first sign of a healthy attitude toward a subject which is vitally necessary to the Jewish school, although terribly abused by it. Already many are beginning to realize that art in education can be used as a most effective weapon to destroy the state of stagnation in which so many Jewish institutions find themselves. Through it they can revitalize Jewish life and make it creative, free and joyous. Let us therefore approach the entire problem in the same spirit of experimentation and cooperation that brings forth the finest and most laudable efforts of all involved.